

Buthan Gross National Happiness

About the Subjective Well-being Institute

The Institute of Subjective Well-Being (<http://www.iswb.org/>) is a non-sectarian, non-political institute based in Vancouver (Canada) devoted to sharing both established and pioneering research in the field of subjective well-being. Membership is free and open to researchers, meditators, philosophers and the public at large. ISWB publishes pamphlets and white-papers, freely available on their site, and also edits a newsletter for media experts who want to receive updates about developments in the field of subjective well-being.

ISWB blog <http://www.amareway.org/> publishes daily updates about scientific research and spiritual insights about living a happy and meaningful life. It hosts guest-posts from leading researchers and practitioners in different fields, from neuroscience to First Nations' wisdom, from Dharma to Yoga, positive psychology, etc.

Chapter 1 – Gross National Happiness (Buthan)

$$\text{Happiness} = \text{Economic} + \text{Environmental} + \text{Physical} + \text{Mental} \\ + \text{Workplace} + \text{Social} + \text{Political Wellness}$$

How to calculate it?

There is no exact quantitative definition of GNH, but elements that contribute to it are subject to quantitative measurement. Med Jones, President of International Institute of Management, introduced an enhanced GNH concept, treating happiness as a socioeconomic development metric. It tracks socioeconomic development in 7 areas

- Economic Wellness: measured by direct survey and statistical measurement of economic metrics (consumer debt, average income to consumer price index ratio, income distribution, etc.)
- Environmental Wellness: measured by direct survey and statistical measurement of environmental metrics (pollution, noise, traffic, etc.)
- Physical Wellness: measurement of physical health metrics (severe illnesses, etc.)
- Mental Wellness: measured by direct survey and statistical measurement of mental health metrics (usage of antidepressants, rise/decline of psychotherapy patients, etc.)
- Workplace Wellness: measured by direct survey and statistical measurement of labour metrics (jobless claims, job change, workplace complaints and lawsuits, etc.)
- Social Wellness: measured by direct survey and statistical measurement of social metrics (discrimination, safety, divorce rates, complaints of domestic conflicts and family lawsuits, public lawsuits, crime rates, etc.)

- Political Wellness: measured by direct survey and statistical measurement of political metrics (quality of local democracy, individual freedom, and foreign conflicts, etc.)

What does it mean?

Gross national happiness (GNH) was coined in 1972 by then Bhutan's King Jigme Singye Wangchuck. GNH is based on the premise that some forms of development are not measurable in monetary terms (a concept that is advanced by the nascent field of ecological economics) while conventional development models stress economic growth as the ultimate objective.

Where are references and further information?

<http://www.grossnationalhappiness.com/>

Chapter 2 – AmAre Way

*Happiness and Meaning = Aware and Accepting + Meaningful and
Motivated + Active and Attentive + Resilient and Respectful + Eating
(Properly) and Exercising*

In Italian, AmAre means "to love"; in English, interconnectedness: (I)Am (we) Are. AmAre stands for being:

- * **A** – **A**ware and **A**ccepting
- * **M** – **M**eaningful and **M**otivated
- * **A** – **A**ctive and **A**ttentive
- * **R** – **R**esilient and **R**espectful
- * **E** – **E**ating properly and **E**xercising

Being **Aware**: aware of context, aware of feelings, intentions. Aware of how we see things, our strengths, values and biases. Aware that, happiness and meaning are not only an end result which shines from far in the future; it is also within us, here and now, and it is about the way we live. Happiness is the way. Through our awareness and actions, we gain the courage to change the things we can change, the serenity to accept the things we can't change. And the wisdom to know the difference.

Being **Accepting**: of things we cannot change, which are inevitable. Of how other people are, and especially how we perceive them.

Being **Meaningful**, by doing what matters, when it matters.

Being **Motivated** means we cultivate our motivation on a daily basis. Some motivations may be common to all, like to live peacefully and be kind to others. Some are more peculiar. When we pursue a specific goal in our daily life, being motivated means to know what we want to do, by leveraging our strengths and grow the energies necessary to move into Being Active.

Being **Active** is important, because actions bring tangible results. We also need to be **Attentive**, so we can be receptive of the feedback and reactions to what we do in any given context, and adapt. Being active and being attentive are a self-reinforcing loop which brings happiness and other positive results to us and to the people, beings and environment we listen to.

We also need to be **Resilient**. Life is not always a big smiling adventure, sometimes external situations can be tough, so it is important for us to bounce back on our feet. Sometimes, there are factors which do not facilitate our peaceful living, so we need to be persistent.

Being **Respectful** is important, because resilience is about persistence and not growing a hard-skin. Respectful of us, other people (who are, too, trying to be happy, and likely also trying to live peacefully, sometimes in ways which look different from ours), beings and environment.

Eating properly, in terms of quality, quantity and company, is important. For us, and for the impact it has on the environment.

Exercising is also important, both for our body and mind.

Now, we see how to assess our current situation, applying the AmAre framework. The first A stands for Awareness, so here we are with meta-awareness, with awareness about our own awareness. Then, after several chapters devoted to tools and approaches you can use to maximize each component of the AmAre framework, after you make a road-map suitable for your context, and implement them, you will be presented the same assessment, so you can monitor changes over time.

Awareness of our here and now: how to assess it?

Disclaimer: the tools described in this chapter are a way to facilitate happiness and meaning. **They are not a crystal ball, nor deterministic.** We benefit from the learning process of considering different variables, assessing course of actions and seeing potential results in scenarios. The approach drafted here also allows to measure results, building a useful; repository of aggregated, anonymous subjective well-being data.

AmAre is not a panacea or a quick fixer. It is a framework to initiate reflection and skillful action. It is also an outreach method: there are many points to consider and, literally, every day there are several new research findings published in the field of well-being. AmAre is a way to make our body of knowledge easier to communicate and accessible, so then each of us can see her/his path and walk in appropriate ways. Where appropriate is subjective, it changes from person to person, within the similarities that we have as human being.

A		M		A		R		E	
Aware Accepting		Meaningful Motivated		Active Attentive		Resilient Respectful		Eating Exercising	
G	W	G	W	G	W	G	W	G	W

To assess your current situation, in terms of what facilitates happiness, meaning and fulfilment, please assign in the chart above a weight and a grade to each variable. If there are additional aspects you want to assess, just add as many columns as necessary. As a rule of thumb: too few variables lead to a superficial assessment, too many variables lead to a confused assessment, so try to stay within the ten variables provided plus a few of your own if necessary.

For each variable, please specify:

w: weight, importance given to each aspect (sum of all weights should be 100)

g: grade, rating given to each aspect (each grade is a value between 0 and 1)

and then use this formula to calculate your AmAre Index:

$$\begin{aligned}
 & (AwareW * AwareG) + (AcceptingW * AcceptingG) + \\
 & (MeaningfulW * MeaningfulG) + (MotivatedW * MotivatedG) + \\
 & (ActiveW * ActiveG) + (AttentiveW * AttentiveG) + (ResilientW \\
 & * ResilientG) + (RespectfulW * RespectfulG) + (EatingW * \\
 & EatingG) + (ExercisingW * ExercisingG)
 \end{aligned}$$

If you want to use a spreadsheet, where you can insert the values and see them automatically calculated, you can use:

<http://spsh.amareway.org/>

What does it mean?

AmAre formula (Happiness is being: Aware and Accepting + Meaningful and Motivated + Active and Attentive + Resilient and Respectful + Eating Properly and Exercising) is meant to be descriptive and preventive, but not predictive. That is, it

quantifies the current situation, and the strengths and weaknesses we should be aware of and act upon. Regardless of what the number says, we are always responsible, here and now, for our happiness, so a high result means we should keep building our happiness as we have successfully done so far, and a lower result means there are aspects to act upon to improve our lives.

One of the formula's strengths is its unlikeness to reach One, the perfect score, or Zero. This formula is useful so we can improve our awareness about the situation so far, and build a better present. Once the formula served its purposes, we can move on. Because the ultimate happiness is not reaching number 1, it is in finding and renewing the appropriate life-dynamics. If we can accept the way life is, and the fact that different people assign different weights and grades to the pillars of their happiness, and still respect and care about all of us, doing our best for the mutual happiness, we are on the way to build together a lasting happy living.

This is a scale to interpret the overall result of the formula:

0-0.3: This is an unlikely result, so please double check each value inserted. If values are correct, it is possible the perception of your Subjective Well-Being (SWB) tends toward emphasizing the non-positive aspects, or that there is a short-term serious issue. This means there is a need to work on all your priorities to make them more satisfying to you in the medium term.

0.31-0.60: Your level of SWB could be higher, if you are closer to 0.31 result. If you are closer to 0.5, you are near an exact average value where you perceive the same value of positive and non-positive components in your life. In both cases, by working on the AmAre variables (starting from the ones with higher weight and lower grade), you can substantially improve your well-being.

0.61-0.90: You tend towards an optimal level of SWB. You feel happy, and likely experienced most or at least many of the happiness "fringe benefits". You likely live joyfully everyday: no matter the ups and downs we all have, you can make the best of them for yourself and the people around you.

0.91-1: This result is unlikely to be reached, so please double check each value inserted. If values are correct, you are

achieving the maximum level of SWB, which you can sustain by living joyfully.

To interpret the value of each AmAre variable, you can use the same scale. If a variable is high in weight, and low in grade, then it requires attention and action to improve it. If a variable is low in weight, and high in grade, then you may ask yourself if its grade is slightly over estimated.

We suggest calculating your AmAre Index once per week for the first 5 weeks. Then, to calculate it once per month. Please make sure to start from scratch at each calculation, meaning you should not check values assigned in the past; after calculating your current AmAre Index, you can then check what changed compared to the previous calculations. If you want to be reminded about monthly calculation, you can register the AmAre newsletter on <http://www.amareway.org/>

How does AmAre facilitate happiness?

Using an AmAre approach facilitates happiness, mainly by bringing attention to aspects which are important for skillful interaction with people and the context, and by making easier to develop the necessary skills.

A – Aware and Accepting: how can we be more aware of people's emotions and thoughts? How to accept that we have many similarities, and also differences?

M – Meaningful and Motivated: how can we better understand, and remind to us regularly, the importance of being empathic?

A – Active and Attentive: how more appropriate and effective are our actions, once we are empathic? How can we keep attentive to people's feedback, to ensure we connect with their emotions properly, without misinterpreting them?

R – Resilient and Respectful: becoming more empathic may take time, and it is an ongoing commitment; how can we cultivate resiliency, so we are able to be empathic even when it is not easy? What are suitable ways to show we respect people's feelings?

E – Eating properly and Exercising: how does the food we eat influence the way we relate to others? Which foods nourishes us, and which are taxing on our health? Which

exercising and eating habits make easier to relate to other people, and which ones are making us isolated?

Most of facilitation, including facilitating empathy, is done by example. By applying AmAre to cultivate your empathy, and your happiness, you can then adapt it to the context in which children are. The following chapters are about applying AmAre to daily life, the more familiar you are with it, the easier it will be to leverage AmAre into the daily facilitation of empathy among children.

Where are references and further information?

<http://www.amareway.org/>

(Redirect to official website)